



DTP Capitalisation Strategy

Handbook
February 2018

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Abbreviation list

CS	Capitalisation strategy
DTP	Danube Transnational Programme
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EUSDR	EU Strategy for Danube Region
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
MRS	Macro Regional Strategy
PA	Priority Area of EUSDR
PAC	Priority Area Coordinator (EUSDR)
TP	Thematic Poles
TPL	Thematic Pole Leaders



1 Introduction

Dear Reader,

If you are reading this document it means you are involved in the DTP Capitalisation Strategy (CS) and contributing to its success (be a Thematic Pole Leader, project partner, EUSDR Priority Area Coordinator, programme's body member) or just having interest in knowing how it works and its benefits.

The handbook is centred on discussions regarding the topics (common to all Thematic Poles) that generate majority of questions and need to be clarified. In order to respond and identify the open issues, the JS sent a questionnaire to the Thematic Pole Leaders, project partners and Priority Area Coordinators with the aim to identify the potential gaps and provide solutions and clarifications; as well as to assess in which direction the DTP CS is evolving.

The DTP CS has been running for a year (started in January 2017, along with the 1st call projects) and it is a good moment to provide feedback to open issues and look ahead and exploit the benefits the capitalisation process is offering to all the DTP actors.

We hope the discussions will give you meaningful answers to your questions and concerns. You can always contact the DTP JS and our staff will be more than happy to help you!

Your DTP MA/JS



2 Is DTP CS useful for me?

Question No. 1

Q: We Thematic Pole Leader have been wondering with our fellow thematic pole project partners if the DTP CS is really important for us and our work?

A: Like many other things in life, it depends on you. It will be as useful as you and your partners decide it to be and what you want to reach by implementing it. And like in every relationship, common understanding and agreement are the crucial guarantee that things will thrive. Reaching a common understanding with the partners is needed so you will know which path should be taken and in which fields the synergies could be established.

DTP partners provided the following feedbacks to the answer “What may be the benefits of the capitalisation strategy for your project and your work in general?” :

- Networking and reinforcement of existing networks: getting acquainted with what has been ongoing in thematic field(s) or creating new cooperation networks, e.g. creation of links among knowledge – triangle actors), connecting with relevant potential partners for future projects, experts in the field(s);

- Creating synergies and identifying complementarities with the projects within and outside the DTP;
- More efficient dissemination of project results, more visibility to the projects and better and wider outreach to stakeholders that might otherwise not be reached (in geographical and topical sense);
- Potential cross fertilisation with positive consequences on the quality of the deliverables / outputs (due to supportive function of similar outputs from other projects);

This presents a wide range of opportunities and if dealt prudently, you may discover endless benefits for your project and your organisation’s work.

Question No. 2

Q: What does it mean? How can we benefit from it in practical terms?

A: Think of capitalisation as a process that has a seeding function. You can take advantage of reached results and thus facilitate future activities. And where is seeding there is always harvesting so you can produce new knowledge building on existing experience and practices.

You can reinforce existing or create new cooperation networks. There may be someone out there of great help to you, whose practice, experience and knowledge will give you new insights for your work in future, as well.

Question No. 4

Q: But when it comes to synergy building with other fellow projects within our Pole, we don't share common topics and it is difficult to identify the common themes for capitalisation activities.

A: It may happen that synergy building is not that easy task since some projects do not share that many common topics. But, it is not only about the topics. It is also about sharing methods and good practices, reaching the same stakeholders, etc. Synergy may also go hand in hand with complementarity, two sides of the same coin. Complementarity means mutual complementing or completing. Complementarity may be assessed by taking into consideration their objectives and analysing the features (similar as in the case of synergy identification process) like geographical, thematic, process / institutional complementarity.

Question No. 3

Q: Why the Thematic Poles? And why being the part of it is important?

A: For many reasons. There is a distinct advantage in learning from peers and adopting tried and tested measures without having to start from scratch. Peer review or benchmarking of project outputs are beneficial for all the parties involved as it contributes to better outputs' quality. Furthermore, you can identify solutions to common challenges.



3 Role of the DTP CS actors

Thematic Pole Leaders

Question No. 5

Q: Our institution is the Lead partner of the project that took over the Thematic Pole's leadership. What exactly are we expected to do?

A: TP leader is responsible for coordinating the pole's activities and facilitating the flow of information within the pole (i.e. involved projects), as well as to the DTP JS.

Pole leaders are requested to provide constant feedback to the DTP JS on their activities regarding capitalisation process. As said, TP leaders shall be also in charge of coordinating activities at the pole's level as well as producing documents, e.g. a roadmap per Thematic Pole which summarises all foreseen pole activities and outcomes.

The pole leader is also responsible for establishing contacts with the relevant EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators and ensuring the smooth flow of information.

Question No. 6

Q: There are several projects in our pole and some of them deal with many similar topics and thus have closer co-operation than with the other projects. How to deal with that situation?

A: Yes, it may happen that some projects identify more common points between them than with the others, i.e. emergence of sub-poles is to be expected. This new line of cooperation is welcome as it may enrich the pole's work. However the pole leader should be always acquainted with the work of the sub-pole, not only to inform the JS but also to have awareness of the activities / outputs which may be complementary with the activities / outputs of the pole.

Question No. 7

Q: There are other ETC programmes in which the capitalisation thematic experts are reimbursed for their work. Can we expect some financial reimbursement for our active role of pole leader?

A: Different ETC programmes have differently devised capitalisation strategies. Many times the DTP partners draw a parallel with the INTERREG Europe capitalisation strategy and its set up (policy learning platforms and respective experts). However, the DTP CS differs from other ETC programmes capitalisation strategies. In the mentioned programme, for example, the experts in charge of respective policy learning platforms are hired by the programme. The DTP CS has different set up, and relevant counterpart are the EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators providing political and strategical guidance and help to the Thematic Poles.

Question No. 8

Q: But we were not aware which direction the capitalisation process within our pole would take and could not properly plan financial resources. What should we do?

A: The capitalisation process is not a linear process and its course of action cannot be predicted from the very beginning. The project partners were advised to save budget for capitalisation activities (during the application phase). In case

you did not do that you can carefully check your budget and use the savings for capitalisation activities. Since the activities were not planned either in your work plan or budget, before proceeding you should consult a responsible JS project officer for its approval.

Question No. 9

Q: What would you say is crucial for successful implementation of capitalisation activities?

A: First of all, and of utmost importance, get acquainted well and to the smallest details with the project activities, planned deliverables and outputs, time line, all this regarding not only your organisation but the project partners, as well. This goes not only for you as the Thematic Pole leader and your project but your fellow pole's projects as well. In order to create something new, establish synergies and decide how to organise the work, common understanding of capitalisation activities and its benefits must be reached.

Cooperation is never outdated! Being part of the ETC programme and projects, plus in the capitalisation environment, cooperation is more than important to guarantee successful activities. All the partners of the thematic pole should cooperate, work together, exchange opinions and have a common agreement on which direction they are heading to.

Role of the Project partners

Question No. 10

Q: Our project is part of a thematic pole. What should we do?

A: Do cooperate with the TP leader! Yes, the TP leader is responsible for coordinating the pole's activities and facilitating the flow of information within the pole (i.e. involved projects), as well as to the DTP JS. However, none of this can happen without your dedication to cooperate and provide input to joint work. In order to provide the high quality input get acquainted well and to the smallest details with your project activities, planned deliverables and outputs, time line, etc. You should provide timely feedback to the pole leader and thus enable her / him to structure and organise the work.

Do not forget that of utmost importance is to have a common understanding what capitalisation is, what the benefits are and which line of work your thematic pole shall follow.

For more information, please read the question No. 5, No. 6, No. 9 as it also concerns you, as a fellow project partner of thematic pole.

Question No. 11

Q: We are also facing a problem of not having planned budget for capitalisation activities. How to solve it?

A: As explained in the question No. 8, the capitalisation process is not a linear process and its course of action cannot be predicted from the very beginning. The project partners were advised to save budget for capitalisation activities (during the application phase). In case you did not do that you can carefully check your budget and use the savings for capitalisation activities. Since the activities were not planned either in your work plan or budget, before proceeding you should consult a responsible JS project officer for its approval.

For more info you may consult the part "Practical information".

Role of the PACs

Question No. 12

Q: What is the role of the PAC in the DTP Capitalisation Strategy?

A: The PAC¹ should support the TP co-ordination and activities and streamline the links with the EUSDR PAs. Their role and involvement in your pole's work is highly relevant for following reasons:

- I.** PACs should have advisory and consultative role. PACs, together with the Steering Groups, ensure the implementation of the EUSDR . They can guide you by providing you advice whether your intended line of work follows the Action plans and how you may streamline it.
- II.** PACs can guide the TP by providing also thematic orientation and inputs.²

III. PACs have more than valuable support in ensuring viability and sustainability of pole's results. Through communicating progress made and concrete achievements while working with the PACs you will raise awareness of your work. The steering group members can bring the pole's results to the Danube region authorities.³

Since PACs are leading the Steering Groups, which are the expert drivers of a day-to-day implementation, with members from all involved countries, they may trigger the cooperation between projects and policy and therefore present a hub and a link between the different levels, ministries and implementing bodies. In such a way, the consistency and coherence between the different levels is ensured.

¹*Each Priority Area is jointly coordinated by two participating countries (or regions), who work in consultation with the Commission, relevant EU agencies and regional bodies. The Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) are leading the Steering Groups, which are the expert drivers of a day-to-day implementation. The PACs, together with the Steering Groups, ensure the implementation of the EUSDR More info on EUSDR governance <https://www.danube-region.eu/about/governance>.*

²*Action plan's aim is to go from 'words to actions' by identifying the concrete priorities for the macro-region. They present operational objectives, projects and actions for each priority area. In addition, concrete targets are defined for each priority area. More info on <http://www.inter-reg-danube.eu/about-dtp/eu-strategy-for-the-danube-region>*

³*One of the comments in the PAC survey was: "Cooperation should bring the benefits during projects implementation but what is more important, also after the projects are finished. Because it is very important to ensure the projects sustainability through building contacts and partnerships."*

Question No. 13

Q: Why our pole's work might be of any interest to the PACs?

A: Remember that development and change often happen not only thanks to the MRS but due to developments in these frameworks, co-existence and coordination across the frameworks. The set-up of the DTP thoroughly considered the EUSDR, therefore the capitalisation results are, without any doubt, of great importance to the PACs. You will provide information from the ground, and the projects within your pole with identified synergies and complementarities, on the basis of which you will identify further work, should contribute to improvement of the challenges identified in the Action Plans.⁴

A: Very good. The involvement of the EUSDR PAs is hoped for from the very beginning of the capitalisation strategy. As mentioned before but to summarise again: the Thematic Poles are defined in accordance with the EUSDR Priority Areas and expected to bring fruitful contribution to the macro regional processes. The close cooperation with the PACs shall ensure your pole's work is aligned with strategic objectives of the PA(s). Political support should not be overlooked, as the PACs are representatives of relevant institutions in the field of respectful PA(s), which ensures they have access to important stakeholders, which is of immense importance to you as well, once it comes to communicating and further spreading and sustainability of results.

The advice is to consult the relevant PAC(s) in order to confirm a relevance of your pole's work for the respective PA(s) and if in line with respective Action Plan(s) and its objectives and targets. This can further structure and contribute to the quality of pole's results.

Question No. 14

Q: We have already established contacts with PACs. How to proceed?

⁴*One of the comments in the PAC survey was: "We are aiming at establishing close links between the Priority Area and the project partners in order to integrate their know-how in the strategy's initiative and to provide them access to the strategy's networks and communication channels. As a result, the know-how of the Thematic Pole could initiate the development and implementation of similar projects in further regions of the EUSDR and the project partners of the Thematic Pole should have better access to experienced partners in order to develop further projects and initiatives."*

Role of the JS

Question No. 15

Q: What is the role of the DTP JS? What should we expect from the DTP JS?

A: The DTP JS has an overall coordination role of the CS. The DTP projects / thematic poles own the process of capitalisation and synergy-building. DTP JS supports this process in terms of communication and coordination, collecting the outcomes of each Thematic Pole and making sure it reaches programme bodies, stakeholders and other Interreg programmes.

The DTP JS also provides a platform for organising thematic poles' meetings. The DTP JS uses its programme events (e.g. Lead Partner seminars, Annual Forum) to organise such meetings and facilitate meet ups with the PACs, which should contribute to making closer contacts within the pole. However, it should be underlined that the DTP JS does not have either resources to organise all the meetings, as its role is devised in such a way as to serve exclusively as meetings' platform.

The DTP JS in mid-2017 sent a communication to all other INTERREG programmes, informing about the DTP capitalisation strategy and inviting the programme to their projects, in case they are interested in joining the thematic poles and their work. The DTP JS will continue working on disseminating information and attracting relevant actors and stakeholders. The DTP JS shall continue promoting the DTP CS across the Interreg and other EU programmes.

4 Practical information

Question No. 16

Q: In discussion No. 8 you mentioned that we were advised in the application phase to save some funds for capitalisation activities. We (the Lead Partners, project partners) are struggling with the lack of funds since we were not aware the capitalisation process might be that extensive and demanding in terms of resources (time and money).

A: The capitalisation process, as devised by the DTP programme, is evolving and cannot be predicted from the very start, as it depends on many variables, often unknown in the beginning (e.g. which projects will form the poles, in which direction the projects will decide to take off the capitalisation work, etc.). In both cases (whether you planned money in the application or not), first you should know to the smallest details your work plan and check if there is room for any savings. Our experience (dating from the previous programming periods, as well) shows that there is always a room for manoeuvre. In case you plan a pole's joint meeting and any of the project partners is facing the financial problems to attend it, the (lead) project partner can send its project partner(s) from the country in which the meeting will be held to attend it. And nowadays with all the communication technologies you have a plenty of possibilities to organise meetings online and use open channels of communication, e.g. video-conferences, basecamp.

The creation of joint outputs / deliverables is highly hoped and expected.

Question No. 17

Q: How to report a joint output?

A: First, please contact your project officer in the JS and ask for the approval of the joint deliverables / outputs and provide clear budget breakdown per partners, as it is a new one, not planned in the beginning and contained in the application form. Do remember that reporting of capitalisation outputs is the same like in case of outputs in the regular projects, meaning that outputs should be reported only once, i.e. two or more projects cannot report the same output. The Pole Leader will report the output. However, the partners involved in creation of the output will provide a focused description, in their respective Partners Reports, on the activities carried out with the aim to obtain capitalisation deliverables / outputs.

As mentioned, reporting of capitalisation deliverables / outputs follows the logics of deliverables / outputs reporting in regular projects, therefore for any clarification you are strongly advised to check the DTP project implementation documents, <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/relevant-documents/documents-for-project-implementation>, as well as to get in touch with respective JS project officer.

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